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THE STATES-ITEM

Gray Says FBI Made Thorough Probe of Watergate Affair

WASHINGTON (AP) — L. Patrick Gray testified today the FBI made an all-out investigation of the Watergate bugging affair and offered to make the FBI's raw files in the case available for inspection by any member of the Senate.

Gray, who has been acting director of the FBI since the death of J. Edgar Hoover last May, was questioned by the Senate Judiciary Committee at the start of hearings on his nomination by President Nixon to be the permanent director.

He was questioned by Chairman James O. Eastland, D-Miss., about the kind of investigation the FBI made of the break-in at the Democratic national headquarters in the Watergate complex here last June.

Gray said that he learned of the Watergate break-in and bugging while on the West Coast and immediately called his No. 2 man, W. Mark Felt, the Hill, to spare no horses."

Earlier, Gray denied he made political speeches for President Nixon during last fall's campaign.

Gray told the Senate Judiciary Committee, which is considering his nomination to be permanent FBI director, that his many speeches last year were made in conjunction with department business.

"I submit, Mr. Chairman, that a fair reading of these speeches will indicate clearly that these were not political or campaign speeches. There was no intent that they be and they were not written to be political or campaign speeches," Gray told committee Chairman James O. Eastland, D-Miss.

Some have charged that Gray's speeches supported Nixon's re-election effort, and as such violated the nonpartisan principles of the FBI.

Gray told the committee that the first principle controlling his conduct during the past 10 months has been that the bureau "will remain completely and absolutely nonpolitical."

"This is one of the pillars of its historic strength," he said. "This is a policy that enables the FBI to perform efficiently regardless of which great political party holds the reins of government ... a policy that enables the FBI to carry out its responsibilities without the pull of political allegiance or the thrust of political influence."

Gray said Nixon told him last May, when he was named to replace the late J. Edgar Hoover, and again on Feb. 16, when Nixon nominated him for the permanent position, that the FBI and its director must "continue to stay out of politics and to remain free of politics."

A career Navy officer with extensive submarine experience, the 56-year-old Gray became a special assistant to the then-Vice President Nixon upon retirement from the service in 1960 and helped him campaign against John F. Kennedy.